

E. S S A Y S

ON THE

PUERPERAL FEVER,

AND ON

PUERPERAL CONVULSIONS.

*Thomas*By THO. DENMAN, M.D.

Seclusis practicis observationibus, id quod vel mihi,
 vel alii cuilibet pro ratione habetur, nihil fortasse
 erit aliud quam rationis umbra aut phantasma, hoc
 est mera opinio.

SYDENHAM,

 L O N D O N ;

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T O

Dr. WILLIAM HUNTER,

Physician to her MAJESTY,

THE following Essays, which can only be acceptable, because they are published with the desire of being useful, and connected with a branch of the profession particularly indebted to him for many improvements, are dedicated, with the utmost respect,

By his obedient servant,

THOMAS DENMAN.

LONDON,
June 27th, 1768.

DR WILLIAM HUNTER

Physician to the Museum

The following is a list of the
specimens of the genus
which are deposited in the
Museum of Natural History
at the University of Oxford
and are now in the possession
of the University of Oxford
and are now in the possession
of the University of Oxford

By the University of Oxford

THOMAS DENNIS

ESSAY

ON THE

PUERPERAL FEVER.

AS the disease which is the subject of this essay, occasions the death of much the greater part of women who die in childbed, I hope an endeavor to give a more distinct account of it, and of a method of cure which has succeeded better with me, than any hitherto recommended, will not be unfavorably received.

A wish to avoid confusion, induces me to enumerate the different names, under which me-

B

dical

dical writers have expressed their ideas of this disease. Some have represented it as entirely owing to the milk ; others* have termed it an inflammation of the *uterus*, and many a suppression of the *lochia*. The latter have called the disease by the name of a *symptom*, and (which makes the error of great importance) from this improper appellation, have directed a method of treatment, which, it is to be feared, may often do much harm. To these may be added another class, who have re-

* POUTEAU calls it an erysipelatoſe inflammation, and gives an account of the extraordinary good effects of camphire in large quantities. But I was informed by a phyſician, who had converſed with him on this ſubject, that his opinion was altered with reſpect to that medicine.

POUTEAU. *Melanges de Chirurg.*

ferred

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ferred this to the number of hysteric diseases *.

Many alterations have been made in the method of treating this disease, with very little improvement, from the time of HIPPOCRATES ||, to these days. He advises bleeding, fomentations, laxative medicines, and emmenagogues. The prac-

* “Primis post partum diebus, non bene purgata est utero: sed de dolore lumborum, torminibus ventris, alvo adstricta, et somno per aliquot noctes inquieto, conquerebatur. A practico quem in consilium vocavit, validiores essentiae ad pellenda lochia fuerunt datæ; et ad alvum aperiendam, uncia dimidia salis amari sedlicensis in aqua simplici soluta est oblata. Inde auctis torminibus, nec facta per alvum, nec per uterum excretionem, converso sanguinis versus superiora motu, deliravit, et accidentibus convulsionibus, extincta est.”

HOFFM. *de Mal. Hyst. Obs.*

The want of distinguishing hysteric diseases in a literal and a metaphorical sense, seems to have occasioned many mistakes.

|| HIPPOCRAT. *de Morb. Mulier.*

tice of giving laxative medicines came into disuse §; but some eminent gentlemen of the present time have re-established it, notwithstanding the general prejudice, which had long prevailed against it; in the diseases of women in childbed.

The case seems complex; for if we consider that those who die of this disease, always labor under a looseness, and that evidently the most untoward symptom, prudence seems to require that we should guard against it

§ “On défend sur tout les purgatifs, non seulement dans cette maladie, mais encore dans toutes celles, où la matrice est attaquée, parcequ'on, &c.”

DIONIS. *Traité des Accouch.*

The author reasons upon it; but the reverse holds good in practice.

“Inflammato utero, cathartica nunquam non nocent.”

MANNINGHAM. *Aph. Med.*

with

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with the utmost circumspection. But if we look upon the looseness as an endeavor of nature to carry off the offending matter, which is the cause of the disease, and indicative of the proper method of cure, we should be inclined to think the encouragement of it, the most expedient step we could take to relieve our patient.

Experience has confirmed the superior reasoning of those who have acted from the latter consideration ; for greater success has attended this, than the method almost universally followed before: but this disease is yet very often fatal. A presumption that frequent practice hath given me an opportunity of remarking some occurrences in this disease, which have not been mentioned, or have been overlooked by writers on this

B 3 subject,

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subject, has induced me to offer my present sentiments concerning it. I am willing to hope they will be of some use to those poor women who are liable to this disease, and give some satisfaction to those who meet with frequent instances of it. Though fully sensible of the safety and efficacy of the method proposed, I am exceedingly diffident of the manner in which it is introduced, and can only hope for the reader's indulgence, by assuring him that the description of the disease, and the account of the effect of the medicines, were both taken at the bedside of the sick; which I trust will appear to any gentleman who takes the trouble of comparing this essay with his own diary.

When a woman has been delivered with the greatest tenderness
and

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and safety, the accoucheur flatters himself, that with prudent management little danger is to be apprehended. In this expectation he is often disappointed; for she may be afterwards seized with a rigor, followed by a train of alarming symptoms. She is chiefly subject to this within forty-eight hours after delivery, but it may happen on the fourth or fifth day, nay, I think it sometimes comes on at a much later period than is commonly suspected*. Some have thought that the symptoms have come on without any preceding rigor; but it is probable that the mistake arose from its happening before delivery, when it was unob-

* The wife of PHILINUS was seized with a rigor, followed with the symptoms of this fever, on the fourteenth day after delivery.

HIPPOCR. *de Morb. vulg.* lib. 1.

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served; at least I have seen instances of this kind †. It is generally exceeding strong; and in proportion to the violence and duration of it, our judgment of the succeeding disease is to be formed. Besides the symptoms which occur in this, in common with other fevers, there is a vomiting of green or yellow bitter matter, a hardness or swelling of the *abdomen*, equal sometimes to the size it was before delivery, and such exquisite tenderness over the whole *hypogastric* region, that the patient can scarcely bear the slightest touch without complaint. Sometimes there is only a nausea or loathing of the stomach, with a disagreeable taste in the mouth; the tender-

† The wife of EPICRATES was seized with a rigor before delivery.

HIPPOCR. *loco citato.*

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ness is less, and not perceptible, without pressure upon the part immediately above the *pubes*. There is also great pain in the back and hips. An instantaneous change or suppression of the *lochia* takes place; commonly the former, though the latter may happen if the attack is severe, but I think it very rarely does. Whichsoever is the case, there is a sense of throbbing pain and uneasy heat through the parts in general. The urine is voided often, with pain, and in a small quantity, as if the inflammation, originally in the *uterus*, had reached the neck of the bladder; and often a *tenesmus* attends. The tongue is usually dry, and feels hard to the touch, but sometimes it is moist, and covered with a thick brownish fur. The patient is immediately

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ately seized with the strongest apprehension of her danger, and labors under vast anxiety, her countenance shewing indubitable marks of the great suffering both of body and mind†.

These symptoms frequently come on with great rapidity; there having been instances of the woman's dying within twenty-four hours from the first attack; nay, I have heard, in the very rigor; but this could happen only to very weak people. In other cases, the rigor is followed only by the swelling and tenderness of the *abdomen*, which is to be esteemed the pathognomonic symptom of this disease; and it must be observed in general, that though these,

† TISSOT. This very candid and sensible writer likewise mentions a redness of the *abdomen*. But I have never attended to it.

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and the symptoms hereafter mentioned, often come on, in the manner described, yet cases will arise in which there will be considerable variation, depending upon the degree of the disease, the constitution of the patient, and the difference of time after delivery, when the disease appears.

The signs of inflammation continue for some days, when those of putridity appear. The teeth collect very early a brown, adhesive fordes. All kinds of food are nauseated, except perhaps acids or cold water. A *singultus* attends, every motion of which affects the *abdomen*. *Petechiæ* or *vibices* appear, and often there are crops of vesicular eruptions; but the eruptions at least, seem rather the consequence of the manner of treatment than of the disease, for they

they never afford any relief, which is usually the case in true eruptive fevers.

With respect to the looseness — It sometimes comes on immediately, at others, when the disease hath continued three or four days; but it constantly attends, and cannot be removed without the greatest danger, as well as difficulty, till the termination of the disease. The stools come away involuntarily towards the conclusion, and are always preceded by an additional degree of pain (unless in the case of a mortification); and the evacuation never fails to give momentary relief. The stools are of such a nature as might be expected, and such as are always found in bilious and putrid diseases.

As far as I have been able to observe, a crisis is not to be expected

pected in this disease; that is, speaking of a crisis as the turn of a disease, in consequence of such an alteration of the morbid matter, as determines the patient for life or death. Those who have recovered, have seemed generally to owe their safety to a happy strength of constitution, able to withstand the continuance of a long looseness, by which the disease appeared to be gradually wore off; or to a spontaneous vomiting. I think the eleventh, from the first seizure, is most commonly the day on which the patient dies. But the most favorable change which I have yet seen, is a return of the *lochia* to their former state, or a fresh discharge, with an abatement of the swelling and tenderness of the *abdomen*, accompanied with a moisture of the skin; but whether the

the return of the *locbia* be a consequence of the decrease of the other symptoms, or the reverse holds good, I cannot pretend to say; for the effect follows the cause so speedily that it is difficult to distinguish them.

The tenderness of the *abdomen* was mentioned as the pathognomonic symptom of this disease; but as the event depends greatly upon a proper distinction of it from the miliary fever, with which it may be confounded, it is thought necessary to add a case of that fever, and to mention the following particulars.

The sighing, anxiety, and oppression, are common both to this and the miliary fever; but here, the rigor is stronger, is of longer continuance, and not successive—the urine is very high-colored—the
the

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the heat of the skin more intense
—the pulse is fuller and stronger
—the tongue, instead of being
covered with a white and moist
fur, is dry and brown; or, if
moist, is loaded with a brownish
fur.—Eruptions give no relief,
and cordials increase this disease.

This fever is easily distinguished
from the febrile disturbance, oc-
casioned by the milk, if it comes
on at the time the milk is expect-
ed, by the symptoms before men-
tioned, and by the flaccidity of
the breasts; yet the consent be-
tween these and the *uterus* is so
intimate, and the transition of the
humors from one to the other so
instantaneous, that an excuse may
be readily accepted for those who
have mixed diseases, in some re-
spects similar, yet essentially dif-
ferent. A large quantity of pale
urine,

urine, at the turn of the milk fever, is to be esteemed a critical discharge; but that fever does not seem, by any means, an unavoidable complaint, if mothers could be persuaded to think suckling their own children a duty incumbent upon them. Some mothers cannot indeed suckle, and for such I would beg leave to recommend the taking some laxative medicine, when the first attempt is made to repel the milk, as the only thing which can prevent the bad consequences, which never fail to attend the interruption of this very important secretion.

After-pains are distinguished from the pain of the *abdomen* attending this fever, by the perfect freedom from pain in the interval, which never happens in this case, though sometimes there will be
exacer-

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exacerbations; besides, the regularity in which all other circumstances proceed, and the absence of a fever, cannot leave a doubt about them.

Some constitutions are naturally subject to diseases proceeding from a redundancy of the quantity, or an exaltation of the quality of the bile; and that the secretion of that humor is much disturbed during gestation, we need no other proof than the obstinate costiveness, or almost perpetual vomiting of bilious matter, with which many are afflicted at that time. I cannot omit this opportunity of mentioning that the plentiful use of fruit, especially strawberries, when in season, particularly in a morning, is the most effectual and agreeable method of preventing these inconveniences. Unwholesome diet may

C

be

be a predisposing cause of this disease, but the more immediate are sudden frights, and rising too soon after delivery. SYDENHAM ascribes the suppression of the *lochia* almost wholly to the latter; and so many disagreeable effects follow this imprudence, that too much care cannot be taken to prevent it. The pernicious custom of using hot spices, in any quantity, in the food of women in childbed, may give rise to this disease, and the neglect of procuring stools in due time after delivery. Every accident which obstructs perspiration may have the same consequence, therefore great care should be taken in changing any part of the dress, both before and after delivery. This disease, it must be acknowledged, may follow a labor under the best circumstances; but endeavors to dilate

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late the *os internum*, and too hasty a separation of the *placenta*, will often produce it *, and binding the *abdomen* tight after delivery: but I do not include hard labors as a frequent cause, for it is remarkable that women recover very soon after them.

* RUYSCH suffers no opportunity of discountenancing these practices to escape him; but he has expressed himself in so urgent a manner in the following passage, that I cannot refrain from transcribing it.

“Vidi in puerperis post partum, et satis quidem facilem, uterum inflammatum. Discant ergo obstetrices, uterum neutiquam fortiter extrinsecè comprimere; discant cautiùs agere in secundinis extrahendis, ne abdomen, et per consequens uterum, nimis comprimant. Sint prudentiores obstetrices in obstetricatione, ne continuè absque necessitate, manus in utero habeant, a qua frictione non raro expertus sum uteri partem inferiorem fuisse inflammatum. In summa, absit omnis crudelis uteri tractatio, ne tale amplius occurrat malum abominandum.”

Vol. I. *Obs.* Lib. 10.

A disease in which the dangerous symptoms come on with such impetuosity, and where the event is very often fatal, could not fail to alarm every man solicitous for the welfare of his patient. His anxiety would be increased by the want of a distinct history of the disease; and experience would convince him that the method of cure, generally directed, was not to be depended upon.

Great stress hath been laid upon early, plentiful, and repeated bleeding, to which an objection arises from this consideration. Too hasty a separation of the *placenta* is allowed to be a common cause of this disease, and a loss of blood much greater, than a prudent physician would venture to take away, an almost certain consequence of such separation: if bleed-
ing

ing was the proper method of cure, would not the hemorrhage have prevented this fever? But in order to state this point of practice impartially, I cannot avoid inserting the following case, which was sent me by a gentleman of distinguished abilities, who lives in the country, and which speaks more powerfully in favor of bleeding, than any arguments which can be urged.

“ I was called in the middle of the night to go about ten miles to a woman whose *placenta* had been detained many hours after the birth of the child. Want of proper courage to withstand solicitation, and the distance from me, were my reasons for undertaking the separation. It adhered strongly, but the separation was made very gently and without any con-

considerable hemorrhage. On the third day she was seized with a shivering and fever, which continued all night, and was relieved the next morning by so large a discharge of blood from the *uterus*, that I was sent for on that account. There was no swelling of the *abdomen*, but great tenderness, much pain in the head, constant thirst, a little delirium, and no stools. An increase of fever came on every evening, and the same large discharge of blood every forenoon for ten days. She took occasionally testaceous powders with rhubarb, saline mixtures, tincture of roses, infusion of Peruvian bark, and some doses of opium. She at length recovered.

Here the hemorrhage seems to have been compleatly critical, and did such cases often occur, there could

could be no doubt of the propriety of confiding in bleeding alone. But after the most careful observation, the event has so often proved to me, that large bleedings weaken the sick, without proportionably lessening the disease, that I have for a long time never taken away blood in any quantity. In very full, sanguine habits of body, bleeding may be necessary, but I think the repetition of it should be insisted upon with great caution.*

We

* LIEUTAUD is the only author of his country, who hesitates upon this point.

“ Equidem de sanguinis missione multum controvertitur; nonnulli enim venam pluries tundendam esse arbitrantur, dùm cæteri vel minimam sanguinis detractionem averfantur.” And afterwards— “ Hæc (praxis) enim docet phlebotomiam, haud nisi casu urgentiori et summa cautela esse celebrandam, pro rerum

We have also been taught to endeavor strenuously to remove every obstacle to the regular procedure of the *lochia*. But it unfortunately happens that almost all the medicines, recommended as emmenagogues, are improper in every inflammatory state of the blood; and experience proves that, in this case, all the symptoms are aggravated by their use.

It may not be amiss to observe that either a great or a little quantity of the *lochia*, unattended with other symptoms, is not to be looked upon as a disease, or meddled with.

In the first place it seems right that we should attempt to shorten

conditione. Cæterum multa de hac re lepida, & dilucidè tradita, prostant apud scriptores, quæ tamen inter praxim implicatissima deprehenduntur."

Synops. Univ. Pr. Med. pag. 465.
the

the rigor, by applying hot things to the extremities, and by giving plentifully warm diluents, animated with a small quantity of brandy, or some volatile spirit: but as the hot fit which succeeds, will in some measure be increased by the quantity and activity of the cordial used for this purpose, spirituous liquors, unmixed, ought not to be given.

When the attack is severe, a spontaneous vomiting comes on, and what is thrown up is bilious; indeed the commencement of the disease is sometimes not unlike a moderate degree of the *cholera morbus*. Can any reason be assigned, why in this case we should vary from the confirmed practice of aiding the operation or propensity of nature, and not second her endeavors?

It

It may be objected, that a woman lately delivered has suffered too much from her *labor*, to bear, with safety, a method found useful in other fevers, with the same indications. But apprehending that many have fallen sacrifices to this supposition, it is necessary to observe, that the experience of very eminent men justifies the propriety of treating whatever disorders arise, before or after delivery, without attending minutely to their particular situation.

It may likewise be conjectured, that the disturbance and uneasiness of the stomach ought to be attributed to uterine irritation, and is an hysteric symptom, in the literal sense of the word. To those who are of this opinion I would beg leave to observe, that if we consider the matter thrown up, the relief
given

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given to the patient by the evacuation, and the great advantages thence accruing in the course of the disease, it is difficult to fix upon circumstances which indicate a greater necessity for it. I know it is an accepted rule, that the vomiting of porraceous matter is a symptom of the hysterical disease, and then it is never thought to require evacuations; but to this it might be urged, that in the very case objected, the porraceous matter seems, much more probably, to be the *materia morbi*, which occasions the spasms, and that the evacuation ought not to be checked, while the matter discharged is preternatural. Pale urine, which is esteemed the diagnostic of the hysterical disease, is wanting in the present case, not to mention the croud

croud of dangerous symptoms which attend.

But however defective this reasoning may be, I am as certain as observation can make me, that when these complaints of the stomach accompany the beginning of this disease, the patient will always find relief from vomiting.

Having often seen the failure, and been disappointed in the trial of the usual method of treating this disease, I determined to give a medicine which hath gained much credit under the sanction of Dr. *James*. The first case which occurred to me after this resolution, was in the latter stage of the disease, when it proved ineffectual. I did not think this sufficient, and had soon after an opportunity of giving it immediately

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ately after the rigor, and though the operation was severe, I had the pleasure of finding my patient freed from the imminent danger in which I before apprehended her. Not being prejudiced with the opinion of any specific property in that medicine, but adverting to the sensible effects of it, I gave the following powder, which generally produces the same operation.

℞ Tartar. Emet. gr. ij.
Ocul. lancror. præp. ℥j. intimè miscantur.

Of a powder thus prepared, I give from two to six grains, and I repeat it, as circumstances require.

If the first dose does not procure any sensible operation, I repeat it in an encreased quantity at the end of two hours, and proceed

ceed in that manner; not expecting any benefit but from its sensible operation.

Should the disease be abated, but not removed (which sometimes happens) by the effect of the first dose, the same medicine must be repeated, but in a lessened quantity, till all danger is over.

But if any alarming symptoms remain, I do not hesitate one moment to repeat the powder, in the same quantity as first given; though this seldom is necessary, if the first dose operates properly.

It is to be observed, that as the certainty of cure depends upon the proper repetition of the medicine, the method of giving it at stated hours, does not appear eligible.

If

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If the first dose produces any considerable effect by vomiting, procuring stools or plentiful sweating, a repetition of the medicine, in a less quantity, will seldom fail to answer our expectations; but great judgement is required in adapting the quantity first given to the strength of the patient and other circumstances. We are not to expect that a disease which, from the first formation, carries such evident marks of danger, should instantly cease, even though a great part of the cause be removed.

If the sickness or loathing at stomach attended at first, this medicine seldom fails to vomit; and the patient, with a countenance strongly expressive of the benefit she has received, will confirm us in our proceedings. Indeed I am

so little fearful of any bad consequences from vomiting, at a very early time after delivery, that I have thought many other desirable purposes were obtained besides that of cleansing the stomach.

This medicine scarce ever fails to procure stools, which are sometimes of a green color, and sometimes they much resemble yeast. Their appearance ought in some measure to guide us with respect to the continuance of the evacuations. By these the stomach and bowels are cleared of a great quantity of offensive matter; the source of the looseness and other bad symptoms is cut off; the urine is voided in larger quantity; and a pleasing moisture of the skin, or a profuse sweat follows. The *lochia*, before pale, or brown, fetid, and in small quantity, become fresh; the

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the *abdomen* gradually subsides, and all appearances become favorable.

Some can bear very small quantities of the powder, without affecting their stomachs. To these the frequent repetition of glysters of chicken water is very serviceable, by solliciting the discharge downwards, evacuating part of the offending matter, and by acting as a fomentation. The injection of a glyster may also precede the use of the powder, but great care must be taken in the administration, or the patient will suffer intolerable pain, on account of the tenderness and inflammation of the *os internum*.

Alternate doses of the powder and of the saline draughts, have sometimes appeared necessary; and when all danger is over, but

D

some

some degree of quickness of the pulse remains, the saline draughts repeated often, with doses of rhubarb and magnesia, or the testaceous, when necessary, have done much service. It must be remembered, that without stools we can do little service.

HOFFMAN seems to have a particular dislike to purging salts, but I suspect that manna is more disagreeable to the stomach, than any medicine of this class.

At the same time we must avail ourselves of every assistance, which tends to procure the immediate ease of the sick. Fomentations are thought to answer this purpose, and after their use, embrocations with balsam. anod. bat. but the latter seems improper on account of its great heat. Warm oil is much better. But
vapor-

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vapor-bathing, being much more easily used, and answering every intention of this kind more effectually, is to be preferred.

Plentiful dilution being absolutely necessary, the patient should be well supplied with proper drinks. The best, and often the most palatable, is chicken-water. Barley-water, tea of almost any kind, milk and water, and such like things, may be drank at pleasure.

† In the last stage of this disease, when the stools are very frequent, often involuntary, and all appearances threaten danger, the following method has sometimes

† An eminent physician assured me, that, under these circumstances, he had seen very good effects from the use of a glyster of warm oil alone, given every morning and evening.

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produced better effects than could be expected.

Let a glyster of chicken-water be injected every one, two, or three hours, or as often as possible without fatiguing the patient too much, and the undermentioned draught taken every six hours ‡.

℞ Pulv. rad. Ipecac. gr. j.
 Confect. Damocrat. ʒj.
 Aq. Alexeter. simp. vel
 Cinnam. simp. ʒiſs. f. haustus.

If great faintness comes on, a necessary quantity of some cordial medicine may be given, in the interval, between the draughts, and frequent sipping of chicken-water should be urged. On the whole,

‡ After much trial of Ipecacoanha in small quantities, I have had great reason to depend upon the account given of it by the learned and ingenious Dr. AKENSIDE. In the looseness of young children, usually called the watery-gripes, it answers exceedingly well.

the

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the food and medicines are to be made more or less astringent, or cordial, as the case requires, but the use of glysters is indispensable.

When great sickness has attended at the beginning of the disease, and no precautions have been used to cleanse the stomach of the load of offensive matter, attempts to remove the looseness will often fail. When the same symptom came on, in the continued fever described by the illustrious SYDENHAM, in the year 1661; he recommended the omission to be repaired, by giving a vomit at any time of the disease, even though there should be then no tendency to that evacuation, provided the patient was strong enough to bear it.

The good effects I have seen produced by spontaneous vomit-

ings, and a perfect conviction that no bad consequences ever followed, at least, which I was able to observe, do not leave with me a doubt of the expediency of taking this step, without any other exception than that he has mentioned.

To conclude—From the above account it appears,

That the suppression of the *lochia* is a symptom of this disease—

That the milk is only concerned in common with all the other secretions—

That evacuations, in the manner pointed out by nature, can only cure it ; And,

That these evacuations may be used without apprehension of danger, so long as they are indicated †.

C A S E

† I have never had an opportunity of examining the body of any one who has died of this

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C A S E I.

June 6th, 1766. I attended a poor woman, about nineteen years of age, of a delicate constitution, who was delivered of her first child, after a safe and not very tedious labor. On the 8th, her milk came. On the 9th, she was

this disease, but believe the following account of the appearances after death, agrees with later dissections.

“Puerpera, suppressis lochiis, de dolore in regione uteri durâ et tumidâ querebatur, cum febre, cephalalgia, et tussi. Quarto die post partum in sese concidunt mammæ, et postridie obiit.

Uterus et ovaria phlogosi tacta deprehenduntur. Intestina materiâ quâdam lacteâ obducebantur. Simili ferme humore, scatebant pulmones: cum copia feri subalbicantis, tum in pectore, tum in abdomine.”

LIEUTAUD. *Hist. Anat. Med. Obs.* 1362.

The *materia lactea*, here mentioned, was probably what is now understood to be an inflammatory exudation.—See Dr. Hunter's account of this matter, in the *Med. Obs.* and *Enqu.* vol. ii.

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in all respects as well as could be desired, but after sitting up all day, she was in the evening seized with a strong rigor, succeeded by a vomiting, tenderness and swelling of the *abdomen*, an alteration of the *lochia*, and a very high fever.

On the 10th, I was called to see her, and found she had passed a very restless night, and had a little delirium. She was very poor, and could with difficulty procure such things as were necessary for her. I directed a fomentation to be applied to the *abdomen*, and four large spoonfuls of the following mixture to be taken every six hours.

R. Tart. emet. gr. ij.
Pulv. è chel. Cancr. c. ʒj.
Syr. simpl. ʒss.
Aq. Alexeter. simp. ʒvij. f. mistura.

11th,

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11th, The medicine had not puked her, but had occasioned five stools. The *abdomen* was exceedingly tender, but less swelled. Her headached much and was giddy; her tongue dry, her skin hot, her pulse quick but not very full, and she had great oppression about the *precordia*. The medicine continued.

12th, She had had six motions downwards. The swelling of the *abdomen* was much abated, though the tenderness remained. Her skin was less hot and moist, and all the febrile symptoms were decreased. Continued the same medicine.

13th, She had had four stools since yesterday. There was an evident alteration for the better, and the discharges were fresh. Directed the medicine to be taken every eighth hour.

14th,

14th, She was much better.

17th, She had taken the medicine regularly. It had procured two or three stools daily, and her skin had been constantly moist. No signs of fever remained, except a little quickness of the pulse. The *abdomen* was still tender. Gave a common saline draught twice daily.

20th, Left off the use of medicines.

28th, She was weak, but had no other complaint.

C A S E II.

July 1st, 1767. I attended the wife of a soldier in the guards. She was about thirty years of age, of a very strong masculine habit of body. Her labor was safe but tedious. About thirty-six hours after

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after delivery, she was seized with a strong shivering, followed by severe pains in the *abdomen* and loins. She was in a few hours nearly as big as before delivery; and had also a very high fever.

3d, At one o'clock, I gave her five grains of the powder mentioned in the Essay, but that not producing any effect, in two hours, I repeated it. In the space of six hours after the latter dose, she puked twice and had seventeen stools, which had exactly the appearance of yeast. When the operation was over, the *abdomen* was almost wholly subsided, the tenderness and fever were much abated. Being much fatigued, I gave her a cordial draught with a few drops of laudanum.

4th, She got some quiet sleep, and sweated profusely all night,
but

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but the swelling, tendernefs, and fever were fo much abated, that I did not repeat the powder, but directed four fpoonfuls of a faline mixture to be taken every fix hours.

5th, She had two ftools, and remained much better. Continued the faline mixture.

7th, An eruption appeared, but there being no fymptoms which threatened danger, I did not change the medicine.

12th, I directed the decoction of bark to be taken twice daily.

18th, Left off all medicines—She recovered without any return of fever.

C A S E I I I.

The wife of a tradesman in *Berwick-street*, was delivered on the

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the 17th of *March*, 1768. Her labor was in every respect as favorable as could be wished.

22d, She was seized with a shivering fit, which was succeeded by a vomiting of yellow bitter matter, pain and tension of the *abdomen*, and very high fever. I did not see her till the 23d.

She is naturally thin and delicate. I gave her directly four grains of the powder. In less than two hours it puked her six times, and gave her two stools. She found herself much relieved, and the *lochia* became *fresh*.

24th, She got some rest last night, but the fever continued. The *abdomen* was very tender—her urine was voided often, in small quantities, and with pain—her head was giddy but did not ache much. Her skin moist, but very hot;

hot ; and she was under the most dreadful apprehensions. I did not mention that her milk, which came on the second day after delivery, went back immediately after the shivering. Three grains of the powder were directed to be taken every four hours.

25th, Visiting her early this morning, I found she had passed a very restless night. Her fever continued—the tenderness of the *abdomen* remained, but the tension was entirely gone. She had had seven stools which were of a greenish color and very griping. Repeated the powder as before. In the evening there was little alteration.

26th, She had three stools last night, which were bilious but not green, and had got some sleep. The complaints she had still, were

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a giddiness in her head, a flushing in the cheeks, and some quickness of the pulse. The tenderness of the *abdomen* also remained. Continued the medicine.

27th, She had passed a restless night, though not in pain, and was now and then faint. She had three stools of the same quality as before. Repeated the powder, and directed some cordial mixture to be taken occasionally.

28th, She had four stools yesterday, which were always preceded by a little griping, and got some quiet sleep last night. Omitted the powder, but continued the cordial mixture.

30th, No febrile symptoms remained, except the quickness of the pulse. And the tenderness was gone off. She had frequently loose stools preceded by a little griping.
Directed

Directed a cordial draught to be taken twice daily, with one grain and half of ipecacoanha in each.

3^{ist}, She slept well all night, but had four stools this morning. She had no other complaint except weakness. Directed the cordial mixture to be taken occasionally, and left off all other medicines.

April 5th, She was well.

Instance of the miliary or eruptive Fever.

A gentlewoman near *Leicester-fields*, was delivered of a fine child, after a lingering labor, *September 21st, 1767*. The milk came properly, and she went on without any complaint, except a little faintness,

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faintness, 'till the 24th. I left her well at two o'clock in the afternoon, and at six was called to her in a great hurry, as she was thought to be dying. After dining she had fallen into a sleep, out of which she waked in the greatest terror. I found her in the following situation. She had a kind of convulsive catching when she breathed, great pain and oppression about the *præcordia*, sharp shooting pains through the *abdomen*, hips, and almost through the whole body. Her pulse was not low or very unequal; her tongue was clear; and she had no thirst or other symptom of fever. She imagined herself dying.

The preceding languor, and the hurry consequent to sleep, made me suspect an eruption. Though my own heart ached, I encouraged

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her—applied a bladder of hot water to the stomach, directed a draught with one dram of Confect. Damocratis to be taken immediately, and that she should take some caudle, with a proper quantity of brandy very often: that is, she was to be guided by the effect, not quantity, of what she took. She thought herself always relieved by taking nourishment, which encouraged me to pursue this method.

The next morning she had a numbness in her hands and a tingling in her skin—there was some appearance of an eruption upon her breast, but the sighing and oppression remained though in a less degree. She got very little rest, nor was she refreshed after sleeping.

A dia-

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A diaphoretic draught was directed to be taken every four hours, and some spoonfuls of a cordial mixture with Conf. Alchem. when languid. The bladder of hot water was continued to the stomach, and every care taken to promote the eruption, consistent with allowing her the liberty of breathing cool air. She was very restless in the evening, and twelve drops of laudanum were added to one of the draughts.

26th, She got very little rest, but the eruption was more out, and the oppression, and acute flying pains were abated. Pursued the same method.

27th, There was little alteration. Directed draughts with Confect. Card. and six drops of Vin.

E 2

Antimon.

Antimon. in each, to be taken every four hours.

28th, She had two stools last night. She was full of the eruption, which itched much. She had a quiet night, and her spirits were much better. In the evening she had two stools, which always gave her ease. These I imputed to the Vin. Antim. and therefore omitted it, lest they should interfere too much with the evident intention of nature.

29th, She had a good night, but was sometimes faint. Continued the draughts with Conf. Cardiac.

30th, The eruption was beginning to decline.

October 3d. She had been kept in bed, and very cautious to prevent the retrocession of the eruption,

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tion, which was now almost gone. She had no complaint except weakness.

The *lochia* and milk were never interrupted.

PURBURN, ILL. FEB. 1884

tion, which was now under way.
She had no complaint except

weakness.

The lady and nurse were never

introduced.

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E S S A Y
O N
C O N V U L S I O N S.

TO prevent the reader from putting too much dependence on the following Essay, it is thought necessary to inform him, that the observations therein mentioned, were the result of strict attendance on the case of Mrs. *A.* which is the only one I have ever had an opportunity of seeing.

When convulsions seize a woman at the full time of pregnancy, almost all authors * whom I have

* "ROEDERER indeed says, Naturæ partus, quoad cætera sanus, relinqui potest."

Element. Artis. Obstetric. Aph. 697.

consulted, have recommended the use of every method in our power to hasten delivery ; a speedy delivery being, in their opinion, the only chance to preserve the life of the mother and child.

But the most eminent men of the present time have been induced to prefer waiting the event of the natural pains, or even of the convulsions themselves which generally act as pains. They have observed that the violent method proposed, very often failed of success, and that women laboring under this dreadful complaint, were not only delivered without extraordinary assistance, but were more likely to recover afterwards. Besides, it was not overlooked, that convulsions often came on when things were so circumstanced, that it was impossible to pursue the measures

measures laid down, without bringing on, certainly, as great mischief, as we endeavoured to avoid. This disease, though not frequent, occurs too often, not to make the establishment of this improvement desirable.

Convulsions have been attributed to different causes, chiefly, to too great a quantity of blood carried to the brain; and this has been supposed to be occasioned by the obstruction made to its descent to the inferior parts, by the pressure of the enlarged *uterus* upon the *aorta*. Was this the true reason, they must indeed very often happen. But they continue after the birth of the child, when this cause is removed: nor are women of sanguine habits more subject to them than the delicate.

Two circumstances in the following

lowing cases seem to prove that convulsions are owing to irritation only, and that the irritability is most exquisite at the *Os Internum*. I mean, the increase or continuance of the fits, by an endeavor to dilate that part, and a return of them, when the *placenta* is passing.

Bleeding is well known to lessen in a particular manner, every complaint during pregnancy, arising from uterine irritation, and is therefore very properly recommended in the present case. The necessity of repeating it will depend upon the strength of the patient, and the violence of the convulsive motions. Opium was always remarkable for its powerful effect in calming spasms of every kind, and it seldom fails to abate those it cannot cure. But as an overdose of that medicine will produce convulsions,

vulsions, the repetition of it in small quantities, seems preferable to the method of giving and relying on one large dose.

The distressful solicitude of friends, and the importance of the event, demand still more at our hands, if more can possibly be done.

The physiology of the nerves seems to be little understood. Hence particular medicines have been handed down by different writers, as solely to be relied upon in nervous diseases, which have had their successive triumph and disgrace. No physician now conceives it possible that a nervous disease should have ever been cured by mistletoe, once esteemed the anchor of the distressed; and perhaps the more subtilised medicines

dicines, now given, may ere long be judged as ufeless.

The nerves are thought to be the immediate instruments of communication between the foul and body; and the present mode of practice in their diseases, seems to have its rise in the supposition of our being able, by making new impressions, to remove or abate others. But circumscribed as the human understanding is, we should perhaps better employ our time in exploring the evident causes of these diseases, and the evident effects which they produce upon our bodies, than in researches, from which men of the most comprehensive genius have never yet been able to strike one ray of light, which could lead to the knowledge or cure of a disease.

The

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The observation of convulsions happening most commonly in the first labor, does not perhaps give much information: It is not a general rule; for some women have had them for five or six successive labors. Nor is practice much improved by the remark of their supervening a labor, where the child has been long dead; though the humors, by acquiring some degree of acrimony, and by lying in contact with the irritable parts, may be more likely to cause them; yet that is not thought necessary to produce this disease. † I observed, in the case of Mrs *A.* three days after delivery, the Pathognomonic symptom of the fever, de-

† Ad spasmodica, quæ ex uteri vitio proveniunt, pathemata concitanda non opus semper erit, ut materia corrupta & vitiata, utero inhærens, proxime & immediate id efficiat.

HOFFM. *Thef. Patholog. de Mal. Hysteric.*
scribed

scribed in the preceding Essay, and the *lochia* had the same appearance. There is reason to think this is generally the case, and I am of opinion that the *uterus*, though naturally very irritable, is not so exquisitely irritable as to cause convulsions, without some degree of inflammation.

Women and children are much more liable to convulsions than men. Those incident to children are generally supposed to arise from some cause in the bowels. Without attending particularly to appearances, I believe, the general practice is to apply ourselves to the removal of the cause, and, in pursuing this method, we are seldom disappointed in our expectations of curing the convulsion. In the fever described in the preceding Essay, the cure can only be obtained

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tained by evacuations. Are not these sufficient reasons for trying what effects they would have in the disease now under consideration?

It may be objected, that medicines of this class cannot operate so speedily as the disease requires. This is unhappily sometimes the case, but we can never tell this without trial; for I remember well, in the only case I ever saw, that several Gentlemen present apprehended every returning convulsion would close the dismal scene; yet the poor woman was not only delivered, but lived six days after. If the internal use of laxative medicines or the Antimonial powder be thought improper, glysters can in no light be esteemed so. These may therefore be repeated very often without fear of danger.

HIPPO-

HIPPOCRATES observes that convulsions are caused by inflammation or great heat in the bowels; and perhaps from the same opinion, HOFFMAN † tried the effect of large quantities of cold water, from the use of which his patients received great benefit.

* The French physicians have found warm bathing, very serviceable in hysteric diseases. The trial of the warm bath would in this case be very inconvenient, but as the same, or a better effect may be produced, almost instantly, by the vapor bath, without any kind

† Inter simplicissima, ac diætetica, quæ morbis convulsivis incredibilem ferre solent opem, remedia, præstantissimum est aqua simplex, naturali frigide largius hausta; qua sola atrocissimas convulsiones profligatas vidi.

HOFFMAN. vol. I. pag. 27.

* POOME.— Des Affect. Vapor.

of

CONVULSIONS. 65

of trouble, we need not hesitate to try it. The steam may be carried in large quantities to the *abdomen* and surrounding parts, or, if thought requisite, to the part we suppose principally affected.

It is remarkable that this disease seldom or never occurs but in towns and places where people live luxuriously. The peculiar delicacy of British ladies, joined with the custom of meeting in mixed companies of both sexes, may lead them not only into inconveniences, but produce real diseases. Hence it appears necessary for a woman with child, especially in the latter months of pregnancy, to study to avoid a hurrying, irregular way of life, and every situation where she is under restraint.

F CASE I.

CASE I.

February 22d, 1766. I was called to Mrs *A.* who, after complaining slightly of pain and giddiness in her head, was seized with strong convulsions, which returned every ten or twelve minutes. In the interval she fell into a profound sleep. She was a very little woman, much deformed, at the full time of parturition, and had been bled twice in the preceding month for a bad cough. No signs of labor preceded the fits, which resembled the epilepsy in the violent action of the muscles, working of the lower jaw, and the foaming at the mouth. The first attack was about twelve o'clock. Twelve ounces of blood were taken away, and

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and soon after a large dose of laudanum was given. From the state of the *os internum*, I perceived not the least sign of approaching labor. The convulsions were equal in point of strength, but more frequent in their returns at seven in the evening. Bleeding and the opiate were repeated. At eleven, the *os internum* was thinner but not all opened. At one o'clock, she showed evident marks of being in pain, and the *os internum* was dilated to the size of a shilling and very thin. At three, the dilatation was much increased, and the head of the *fœtus* began to descend into the *pelvis*. At four, the *os internum* was fully open, and the head advanced very fast. There was no collection of water. The external parts were much relaxed. The convulsions

F 2 returned

returned very quick, and acted as pains. At five o'clock, the head lay upon the *perinæum*, and I waited half an hour in expectation of the delivery being finished; when apprehending she would die every instant, I applied the forceps, and delivered her with the greatest ease and without her knowledge.

The child had been dead about two hours.

The longest interval between the fits was after the last bleeding.

When the *os internum* began to dilate, I gently assisted during every fit; but being convinced that this endeavor brought on, continued, or increased the convulsions, I desisted, and left the work to nature.

In the interval between the fits, there was neither that kind of look in the cheeks, or that particular pulse

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pulse which indicates an extravasation of blood in the brain.

She lay about twenty minutes after delivery in the same insensible state, when she fell into a strong convulsion. I found the *placenta* separated, and it was brought away without violence. A moderate discharge followed. The opiate was repeated, and ten grains of musk directed to be given every hour for six times. She had four strong fits within three hours after delivery, which probably were occasioned by the expulsion of the discharges. In the evening she lay as if in a profound sleep, except when urged to take some nourishment, immediately after which she fell into the same state.

24th, She shewed some signs of being sensible, but could not speak.

speak. The *lochia* were foetid, serous, and in small quantity.

25th, She had lain quiet all night, and continued to doze great part of the day, but in the evening she grew restless. The hypogastric region was puffed up, and the *lochia* were in very small quantity. An opiate was given.

26th, She had intervals of rest and uneasiness all night, with catchings of the mouth, and strong twitchings of the hands and legs. The *abdomen* was very much swelled, and the *lochia* as before. She had never spoke, but now shewed marks of being in great pain—The *abdomen* was well fomented, and then embrocated with Anodyne Balsam. A draught with Confect. Damocr. was given every four hours. Cataplasms were applied

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plied to the feet, and glysters injected. In the evening she was more composed.

27th, I found her quite delirious, catching at, and repeating any words spoken by the people about her. Her eyes were remarkably bright and staring—her pulse was low and fluttering. She took her nourishment with great avidity. The *abdomen* was subsided, and she did not seem in pain.

She continued in this manner till morning, when the convulsions returned, in one of which she died.

I was favored with the following case, which happened at a lying-in hospital in town, by a gentleman who attended.

C A S E

C A S E II.

A woman nineteen years of age, of a plethoric, strong habit of body, went to the full time of parturition, without any particular complaint.

December 13th, 1765. She was seized with pain and giddiness in her head, which continued till four o'clock in the afternoon, when she fell into a strong convulsion, which lasted near an hour. At seven o'clock I saw her; and from this time to her delivery, the convulsions returned every twelve or fifteen minutes. She struggled very much in them, and foamed at the mouth. Each fit continued about two minutes. She sighed very much, and seemed sensible during the interval,

terval, but could not speak. She could swallow any thin liquid which was given her.

She was bled largely, and took thirty drops of Tinct. Thebaic. At eight o'clock the membranes broke. The *os tincæ* was dilated to the size of a shilling, but felt very rigid. At twelve the head was beginning to descend into the *pelvis*—the opiate was repeated in a less quantity. At one the dilatation was equal to a crown-piece. The head was locked in the *pelvis*. At four the dilatation was compleat and the head so low that it was thought proper to apply the forceps. She was delivered of a dead child, with great ease and without her knowledge.

The convulsions returned as before, till the *placenta* came away,

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when they left her. She fell into a sound sleep soon after, and in about twenty-four hours recovered her speech, and could recollect her falling into the first fit.

She continued in a better way than could have been expected, till the morning of the third day after delivery, when she had a very strong fever, with swelling and tenderness of the hypogastric region, and died in the evening of the fifth day.

F I N I S.